Ward Mayor.

Martis xxvii *die Septemb.* 1681. *Annoq; Regni Regis* Caroli *Secundi* Angliæ, *&c.* xxxiii.

UPon the Motion of Sir *John Moore*, Knight and Alderman, This COURT doth desire Mr. *Fekyll* to print his SERMON, preached at the *Guildhall* Chappel the 25*th* instant, before the Lord Mayor and Aldermen.

Wagstaffe.

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RIGHTEOUSNESS and PEACE
The best Means to prevent Ruin:

Recommended in a

SERMON

Preached at

GUILD-HALL Chappel,

(*Sept.* 25. 1681.) before the

LORD MAYOR, &c.

BY

THOMAS JEKYLL, M.A. and Preacher at *Newland* in the County of *Gloceſter*.

LONDON:

Printed for *Jonathan Robinſon*, at the *Golden Lion* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard. 1681.

TO THE

Right Honourable

Sir PATIENT WARD, Kt.

Lord Mayor of the City of LONDON;

And to the Right Honourable

Sir JOHN MOORE, Kt.

Lord Mayor Elect;

And to the

Court of Aldermen.

Right Honourable!

HOw much I have reſolv'd and endeavour'd to decline ſuch publick Services as theſe, out of a real ſenſe of my own unfitneſs for them,

them, thoſe that are concerned in the diſpoſal thereof can ſufficiently bear me witneſs; for though I have ſometimes appeared as publickly as I am like to do now; yet it hath been more out of Neceſſity than Choice; Nor do I ſee any Cauſe at preſent to change my Opinion; but yet, having ſuch a ſpecial Order for it, I find a great deal of Reaſon to alter my Reſolution; and indeed I ſhould as much depart from my own ſence of the thing it ſelf, ſhould I not do it now, as I ſhould have done to have ventured upon it without ſuch an Obligation: For though in imitation of the Prophet's Faithfulneſs and Zeal for God and his Country, I thought it my Duty, as a Miniſter of the Goſpel, and as a Native of this great City, whoſe welfare I have ſo much reaſon to be concerned for,

to

to preach the Sermon; yet I should never have offered to print it; that's your own Act and Deed, and not mine; and therefoe it would be presumption in me, and not modesty, to offer to excuse it. May it but do as much good in the Publication, as it was honestly intended in the Preaching, and then we shall all of us have our Ends, and many others also have cause to give thanks to God, and to pray that he would give your Lordships, in particular, *a Name better than that of Sons and Daughters*, and make you, and all your Brethren, as eminent for Goodness, as you are in Place and Dignity. That this Famous and Renowned City may be always as happy in its Magistrates, as it is already in its wholesom Laws and Constitutions. For which, and all other Blessings upon

It

It and You, none ſhall more heartily pray, than,

Right Honourable;

Your moſt obedient
and humble Servant
in Chriſt Jeſus,

Septemb. 30. 1681.

THOMAS JEKYLL.

ERRATA.

PAge 15. line 16. read *unnatural.* P. 16. l. 23. for *will be reaching*, r. *will be found reaching.* P. 28. l. *ult.* dele *us.* P. 29. l. 12. f. *think that ſhall*, r. *think that we ſhall.*

Jer. 5. 29.

Shall I not viſit for theſe things, ſaith the Lord? Shall not my Soul be avenged on ſuch a Nation as this?

THE Prophet *Jeremiah*, was always a Man of very great Piety and Zeal for God, and very paſſionately concern'd for the Good and Wellfare of his Country; the Calamities of which, he not only foretold, but liv'd alſo to bear a very great ſhare in; and therefore well may he be ſtiled, as he often is, the *Weeping Prophet*; ſince all the while he foreſaw thoſe Miſeries, his Mind muſt needs be very deeply affected with them, and in a ſenſe ſuffer under them, before any of the reſt of his unbelieving Country-Men did: and the more too from their Wickedneſs and Infidelity, which was indeed the great Occaſion of them: For as he was a good Man in the general, he knew the Juſtice of God would not ſuffer ſuch a Wicked Nation to go long unpuniſhed: and as he was a Prophet in particular,

he was told both the time and manner when and how it ſhould be done. Which though none of us now dare pretend unto, yet upon a juſt eſtimate of things, when we *ſee Wickedneſs abounding*, and Atheiſm and Prophaneſs breaking in upon us like a mighty Torrent; when *the love of many waxes cold*, and that Zeal for God which ought to be in us all, is turned into an Artifice to promote the Intereſt of a Party; when Charity to Men, which ought to be univerſal, extends it ſelf no farther than to thoſe of our own way; nay, and vents it ſelf in Malice and Revenge againſt all others, we may without any new Revelation, *by the ſigns of the times*, that are already given us, eaſily underſtand what ſhall be the end of theſe things; and then it matters not which way the Juſtice of God brings it to paſs, ſince we have ſo much Reaſon to fear he will certainly do it, let our Deſtruſtion come from *Rome* or *France*, or what is worſe, let it be bred out of the corrupt Humours of our own Bowels. Let it come from far, or let it ſpring up at home, it is all one when it is come; for whoever is the Inſtrument, God is the Author, let who will be the Executioner. God's Juſtice muſt firſt ſign the Warrant for it, and that it will certainly do, where-ever Sin and Wickedneſs grows rampant and outragious. There's the ſame Law and Juſtice for *England* as for *Judah*, and if there be the ſame Sins, there will

Mat. 24. 12.

Mat. 16. 3.

will be the ſame Viſitation, and the ſame Vengeance. It is not, Shall I not viſit for your Sins alone? but, *Shall I not viſit for theſe things* wherever they are committed? He doth not ſay, *Shall not my Soul be avenged* on this, but *on ſuch a Nation as this?* And if we now are ſo, it concerns us as much as them.

The Words in general, are a plain and full Declaration of the heavy Diſpleaſure, and Juſt Indignation of God againſt *Judah* and *Jeruſalem*, for their notorious and abominable Sins and Wickedneſs; and tho they are ſpoken by way of Queſtion, yet they do not in the leaſt expreſs any doubting of the Truth of the Thing, but rather the contrary; for it's a Rule in expounding Scripture, that Affirmative Queſtions do very vehemently deny, and Negative Queſtions do ſtrongly affirm, becauſe they are in the nature of an Appeal about things that are ſuppoſed to be on all hands granted; as for Example, *Doth God pervert Judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert Juſtice?* No, we know he neither doth, nor can. So again, *Shall not the Judg of all the Earth do right?* Yes, doubtleſs he will. So here in the Text, *Shall he not viſit and take Vengeance?* Yes, certainly he ſhall and will, and there is none can hinder him.

Job 8. 3.

Gen. 18. 25.

But more particularly, in the Words there are two Parts.

1*ſt*. An Account of God's Purpoſe and Reſolution concerning the Nation and People of the *Jews*, to puniſh them ſeverely for their many and great Sins: and the Expreſſion implies an intention of great Severity indeed, not only to correct them with ſome ſore Judgment, but even to cut them off from being a People, *To make an utter riddance of them*; *Shall I not viſit, ſhall not my Soul be avenged?* that is, I will do it with all my Might, and will delight in it too, whilſt I thereby make my ſelf amends for all the Trouble they have put me to. As he ſpeaks alſo by the Prophet *Iſaiah* in the like caſe; *Ah, I will eaſe me of mine Adverſaries, and avenge me of mine Enemies.*

Zeph. 1. 18.

Iſa. 1. 24.

2*dly*, The Reaſon or Cauſe of this implied in the Text, and more at large expreſſed in the Chapter to which the Words refer; *Shall I not viſit for theſe things*, before mentioned, *and be avenged* on ſuch a People as are here deſcribed? In the farther Proſecution of which, I ſhall by God's Grace endeavour to ſhew: 1. How God is ſaid to viſit a Nation or People? 2. What thoſe things are that he thus viſits for. 3. What Reaſon we of this Nation have to fear and expect ſuch a thing? And, 4. What we are to do in ſuch a Caſe, and under ſuch Circumſtances as ours are?

I. How God is ſaid to viſit a Nation or People? The word is in Scripture uſed in a threefold ſence.

1. It's ſometimes an expreſſion of kindneſs, and intends deliverance, as *Gen.* 50. 24. *God will ſurely viſit you, and bring you out of this Land*: So *Luke* 1. 68. *He hath viſited and redeemed his People*; in both which places the latter expreſſion ſhews the meaning of the former. Therefore the Pſalmiſt prays that God would *viſit him with his Salvation*. But this cannot be underſtood here, becauſe the things referr'd to, deſerve no ſuch kindneſs. Beſides, the next words of taking vengeance, ſufficiently explain what kind of Viſitation is here intended, *viz.* of Juſtice, and not of Mercy. *Pſal.* 106. 4.

2. The word ſignifies ſometimes an Inquiſition into the ſtate of Affairs by a judicial Proceſs, as *Exod.* 3. 16. *I have ſurely viſited you, and ſeen that which is done unto you*; that is, I have enquired into, examined, and conſider'd your caſe: Job 31. 14. *When God viſiteth, what ſhall I anſwer him?* Not that God needs any ſuch thing to inform him, for he knows all the wickedneſs in the World as ſoon as it is acted; but he ſpeaks after the manner of Men, for the clearer manifeſtation of his own Juſtice, and the greater terror to them: as it was in the caſe of *Sodom*, whoſe

whoſe ſins cried to Heaven; yet ſays *God, I will go down and ſee whether they have done altogether according to the cry which is come unto me:* an expreſſion rather of Juſtice than want of Intelligence.

Gen. 18. 21.

3. The word alſo ſignifies the execution of Juſtice in the puniſhment of Sin; Numb. 16. 29. *If they be viſited after the viſitation of all Men;* that is, if they be puniſhed, or cut off, and deſtroyed in an ordinary manner. So *Exod.* 32. 34. *In the day when I viſit, I will viſit their ſin upon them;* that is, when I come to take vengeance, they ſhall ſmart for it: Thus he is ſaid to *viſit the iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children;* that is, to puniſh them. And in either or both of theſe two laſt ſences are theſe words to be underſtood, whereby they do aſſure us, both of the Juſtice and Severity of God, againſt all ungodlineſs whatſoever. For as he will not proceed hand over head, as we commonly ſpeak, and raſhly condemn any, without enquiry into, and full knowledg of the Caſe: So he will be as ſtrict and ſevere in the taking Vengeance, and none ſhall divert or hinder him from it.

II. What are thoſe things that he thus viſits for? You ſee, according to the Prophet's manner of expreſſing himſelf, it is for Sin and Wickedneſs; and by the coherence of theſe words with the reſt of the Chapter, you will find of what

what kind and quality their Sins were; and indeed they were of such a nature, that he neither could, nor would bear any longer with them; they are such as he hath always used to punish with the greatest Severity, especially too when the Guilt and Contagion of them hath been so deep and spreading, as theirs was at that time; as is plainly manifest throughout this Chapter; Nay, there is not any one of the Sins here mentioned, but is in it self so provoking in the sight of God, that it must needs be the occasion of very dreadful Calamities; what then can we expect from such a complication of Wickedness as is here said to be met together in one, but utter Ruine and Destruction?

1. They are accused of a general failure and neglect in the Affairs of Justice and common Honesty; few or none applying themselves to the practice of Righteousness, to deal faithfully and truly in the World. A Sin as great in its self as it was common amongst them; for the People of *Jerusalem* were generally so corrupt, that a Man might go *to and fro, from Street to Street*, yea, from House to House, for a long time and way together, and yet not light on any *one Man*, that Ver. 1. was sincerely righteous and truly religious. And surely then it was high time for God to arise, both for the Vindication of his own Truth and Justice, and for the Conviction and Punishment of the notorious

notorious Defects in theirs: for tho Almighty God may bear with wicked Men a long time; yet when the *Floods of Ungodlineſs* ſwell high, and like a mighty Torrent bear down all before them, he muſt and he always doth then appear, and enter upon his Viſitation; and therefore, we ſhall find this Temper one of the immediate fore-runners, as well as juſt occaſions, of a general Ruine and Deſtruction. When the old World was drown'd, it was becauſe it was *fill'd with Violence, all Fleſh had corrupted its way upon the Earth*; and when *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* fell, it was not ſo much for the greatneſs, as the generality of their Wickedneſs; for as bad as they were, yet if there had been *but ten righteous Perſons found there*, they might, for ought I ſee, have *remained to this very Day*. And ſo it was here with *Judah* and *Jeruſalem*. Nor was this the Fault of the poorer ſort of People, but even of the greater, who, one would have thought, ſhould have been better, as having greater Opportunities of knowing the Will of God, and more leiſure to practiſe the ſame: *But theſe* (ſaith the Prophet) *have altogether broken the Yoke, and burſt the Bonds*; as if their Greatneſs ſerved only to impower them to do the greater Miſchief, and then to protect them againſt the Laws.

Pſal. 18. 4.

Gen. 6. 11, 12, 13.

Gen, 18. 32.

Mat. 11. 23.

Ver. 5.

2. They are accuſed of Incorrigibleneſs under Judgments, that *tho they had been ſtricken, yet they had not grieved*; *yea, tho they had been conſumed, yet, they*

Ver. 3.

they refuſed to receive Correction. They had been greatly waſted, and yet would not take warning; they had been ſeverely corrected, and yet were never the better or the more reformed; nay, they were grown the more obſtinate and perverſe, than which nothing can be more provoking unto God, there being in it that Obſtinacy that gives the greateſt malignity unto Sin, and thoſe Aggravations that ſooneſt fill up the meaſure of it.

3. They are accuſed of Adultery and Uncleanneſs, a Sin as great as any, and as ſeverely puniſhed in all Ages, as being greatly diſhonourable unto God, and the occaſion of great Confuſion and Injuſtice amongſt Men, and yet committed by them with the ſame Aggravations of Impudence, Frequency and Generality with the reſt; yea, and with one more even amidſt the abundance of outward Bleſſings to engage them to the contrary; *For when he fed them to the full, they then aſſembled themſelves by Troops in the Harlots Houſes*; whereby the Plenty he afforded them, to ſtrengthen and enable them the better for his Service, ſerved only to pamper their Luſts; as if like ſo many Stallions they were fed on purpoſe to be the more luſtful, *every one*, ſaith he, *neighed after his Neighbours Wife*; that is, not only luſted after her in his Heart, but was impatient to obtain his luſtful Deſire upon her. *Ver.* 8.

4. They are accuſed of a diſbelief of God's Word by his Prophets and Miniſters; *The Pro-*
Ver. 13. *phets, ſay they, ſhall become Wind, and the Word is not in them.* They ſpeak not from God, but fright us with bug-bear Tales of their own deviſing; the Evil they threaten ſhall befal themſelves, and not us. A Sin ſo great in it ſelf, that it's thought ſufficient to be its own puniſhment; when wicked Men ſhut their eyes againſt the cleareſt Light, their Hearts have been hardened againſt the ſtrongeſt Convictions; but that is not always the only puniſhment of it, but rather the forerunner of far greater Evils, and many times the means whereby thoſe Evils are brought about: for when any Perſon, or People, *laugh at God's Coun-*
Prov. 1. 25. *ſel, and will take none of his Reproofs,* he commonly,
Rom. 1. 18. *gives them up to a reprobate mind,* whereby their deſtruction becomes the more great and certain: for *he that being often reproved, hardeneth his Heart,*
Prov. 29. 1. *ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed, and that without Remedy*: A Truth ſadly fatal to the People of the Jews, *againſt whom the Wrath of God aroſe for this very cauſe,* as we are told 2 *Chron.* 36. 16. *till there was no Remedy*; and I pray God it prove not as ſadly ſo to us.

5. They are accuſed of Apoſtacy from God
Verſ. 7. and Religion; *They have forſaken me, and ſworn by them that are no Gods*: An Offence of an heinous nature indeed, and ſuch as God always very highly

relents

reſents as moſt againſt his Honour, and one of the higheſt Acts of Treaſon againſt his Crown and Dignity; upon which account he is often ſtiled *A jealous God*, a temper that's always attended with an implacable rage and fury; and therefore no wonder if the vengeance he intends to take, be expreſt in a phraſe that denotes the greateſt reſentment of a thing that can be, *Shall not my Soul be avenged!* an emphatical Speech indeed, and expreſſes the higheſt paſſion, and ſuch as engages the whole power of God to make it good. *Exod.* 20 5. *Prov.* 6. 34, 35.

6. They are accuſed of Deceit and Guile, in Conſpiracies and Plots of Miſchief, to undermine and ruine each other. *They lay wait as he that ſetteth Snares; they ſet a Trap, they catch Men: as a Cage is full of Birds, ſo are their Houſes full of deceit.* *V.* 26, 27. A Charge very great and heinous indeed, in as much as this particular Sin hath ſomething of malignity in it more than the reſt; for beſides the evil aſpect it hath upon Religion, it has a fatal influence upon Society, and not like the reſt occaſions the ruin and deſtruction of the guilty only, but by an unuſual barbarouſneſs and inhumanity of the innocent too: and it hath oftentimes this Ingredient too, to make it the more heinous, in that by falſe Oaths and Perjuries (the moſt fatal Snares for Innocence) it converts Government into Oppreſſion, and Juſtice into Murder; for when the Formalities of it are by ſuch curſed Acts wreſted

to the malice of such greedy Wolves; the Widdows and the Orphans are in the greatest danger, and the just upright Man the soonest made a prey; than which, as nothing can be more dishonourable to Righteousness and Truth; so nothing more destructive to the Professors of it, since what God appointed for their refuge, doth but tempt them into danger; and that which, like the Horns of the Altar, was appointed for a Sanctuary, is turned into a *Golgotha*. And since this was the case of the Jews at that time, what could they expect but a speedy Visitation, and the severities of a just and impartial Vengeance from God? Nay,

7. The Prophets and Ministers themselves are accused of falseness and partiality in the Ministry
Ver. 31. of the Word; *The Prophets prophesy falsly*, a charge frequently brought against them, and urg'd as the occasion of most, if not of all the wickedness committed by that People, and by consequence, of all the Calamities they at any time groan'd under. Wicked Men are apt enough of themselves to commit Sin; but when they are encouraged in it by those that should dissuade them from it, whither will they not run? nay, where will they
Ezek. 13. 10. stop? If the Builders of God's Temple *daub with untemper'd Mortar*, no wonder if it quickly
Isa. 58. 1. fall: if those, that should *lift up their Voices like a*
2 Chron. 13. 12. *Trumpet, and cry an Alarm* to awaken Men out of the

the Lethargy of Sin and carnal Security, *sow Pillows under all Armholes*, and hush them to sleep with the still and smooth Voice of *Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace.* What can be expected, but that they should remain so still, till they sleep in Death, and are only awaken'd by eternal Misery? And this was indeed the lamentable case of this People, and no wonder if their Destruction was unavoidable, since the only means of preventing it proved so deceitful. Ezek. 13. 8. Jer. 6. 14.

8. They are charg'd also with an universal love and liking of these things; *This People love to have it so.* They were all, it seems, agreed, and consenting together in Wickedness, not only giving themselves up to the practice of it, but encouraging one another in it. And *when once a People are thus setled on their Lees*, and become Enemies to their own Mercies, no wonder if *God search them with Candles*, and visit their Iniquity with a Rod, and their Sin with Scourges; and then we may well say to them, as the Prophet doth at the end of this Chapter (or rather black Bill of Indictment) drawn up against them, *What will ye do in the end hereof?* And this leads me to the third Particular, which because it more nearly concerns us, I hasten unto, since it is to enquire, by way of comparison, between us and them. Vers. 31. Zeph. 1. 12. Vers. 31.

III. What

III. What Reaſon we of this Nation have to fear ſuch a Viſitation? We are told by the Apoſtle, *Whatever was written aforetime, was written for our Admonition.* And the Judgments of God upon wicked Men had a double deſign, to puniſh them, and to warn us; therefore they are ſaid to be our *Examples, to the intent we ſhould not luſt as they did.* Now upon any remarkable Diſpenſation of God's Providence in that kind, it is natural to us to inquire into the Cauſe; for we know that God is too righteous to puniſh without it, and too merciful to delight in it; and when once we underſtand the true and juſt Reaſon of his proceeding, we do as naturally reflect upon our ſelves; and if we find our Sins to be as great and as many as theirs, we cannot but expect that our Calamities ſhould be ſo too. But then here's our Miſery, we endeavour to ſtifle the Evidence of our own Conſciences; we ſuffer theſe Impreſſions to wear off, and then, *put far from us the Evil-day*; but now that we may no longer do ſo, let us but a little conſider our own Condition at preſent, that we may not be brought into theirs at laſt; and this we may do by inquiring into three Things. 1. Our Sins. 2. Our Obligations to amend. And, 3. The Calls and Warnings we have had.

1 Cor. 10. 11.

Ver. 6.

Amos 6. 3.

First,

First, Are not our Sins as great as theirs? nay rather, are they not more and greater? The Charge indeed runs high againſt them, but when it comes to be brought againſt us, I fear it will ſwell into a Flood. To compare it only with theirs is but to leſſen it; let it have its full length and weight, and it will be very black and large indeed. The Prophet, it's true, reckons up ſeveral, but I ſhall confine my ſelf to three general Heads. 1. The Corruption of our Minds, as they are ſwerv'd from the Principles of Honeſty and Truth. 2. The Corruption of our Morals, as our Manners are looſe and wicked. 3. The Abuſe of our Profeſſion in matters of Religion, as we are either relapſing from the Stedfaſtneſs of it, or opening a Gap by our natural Diviſions to let in our mortal Enemies to ruine and deſtroy both us and it.

1. How are our Minds corrupted, and we degenerated from the Principles of Honeſty and Truth! What a great ſcarcity of honeſt and righteous Men is there? in whom can we confide? whom can we truſt? *For every Brother will ſupplant, and every Neighbour will walk with Slanders*; yea, even amongſt thoſe that ſay, *They have known the Mind of the Lord, and ſeen the Operation of his Hands*, what little Truth and Honeſty is there to be found? Is not Intereſt and a Party made the meaſure of upright dealing? and the meaning

Jer. 9. 4. *Jer.* 5. 5. *Pſal.* 28. 5.

of

of an honeſt Man, only one of our own way? and yet come to try or truſt him, and he is no longer ſo, than it is for his own Advantage. Intereſt is the God we too much worſhip; nay, ſuch fond and zealous Votaries are we become, that we will proſtitute our ſelves to things mean and ſordid, and far below our Station; and many times offer up our beſt Friends, nay, our own Conſciences; yea, God's Truth it ſelf in Sacrifice to it; yea, ſo greatly are our Minds debauch'd by ſuch falſe and deſtructive Principles, that we are not only led into Error, but even delight in our own Wandrings; and when any Means are offered to inform and direct us better, we preſently ſuſpect, and nickname them, and uſe all the Art we can to render them fruitleſs and vain; and if once we can but lay them under an odious Character, we are proof againſt all their moſt wholeſome Offers and Directions. But,

2. Are our Morals much better than our Principles? If our Lives be but look'd into, our Sins, I fear, will be reaching unto the Clouds, and ſpreading themſelves to every corner of the Land, not a Place nor Perſon that is free. To deſcend to Particulars is not within the compaſs of my Time or Intention at preſent, but it may and ought to be within yours: It is not for me here to point, and ſay, Thou art the Man, but I think

think it becomes every one of us to lay his hand upon his Heart, and to cry, I am he. Perhaps we may not, nay, we cannot all of us be guilty of the ſame Sins; our Conditions, our Conſtitutions, our Relations, our Ages, our Ranks and Qualities in the World are different; and there are particular Sins, incident to every one of theſe, which poſſibly others may neither have Opportuinty, nor be in a Capacity to commit: But then there are others that are more general, which we may all of us run into, and which hardly any Rank or Condition can exempt us from; and theſe are Vices too commonly known and practiſed amongſt us; nay, I wiſh there were not too much cauſe to ſay, countenanced, juſtified and gloried in. How frequently do Oaths and Curſes vent themſelves, not only in our paſſionate, but in our moſt ſober and deliberate Diſcourſes, as if we thought them the chiefeſt Ornaments of Speech! How is Drunkenneſs and Exceſs not only practiſed, but, by its frequency, made light of; nay, by many little Arts and Devices, which otherwiſe might be innocent enough, encouraged and promoted! Good Hoſpitality, cheerful Entertainments, kind and grateful remembrances of Friends and Benefactors, may be uſeful and neceſſary ſometimes; but when I muſt be forc'd to drink up to another Man's meaſure or humour, and as

often as he thinks fit to begin a Health, muſt be obliged to pledg it both in kind and quantity; This makes our Table to become our Snare, this turns innocent Mirth into Madneſs, a Love-Feaſt, as indeed all Feaſts ſhould be, into an heatheniſh Revelling, and a commendable Hoſpitality into Beaſtlineſs and Senſuality. And then follows commonly another Sin, which is now become the Reproach and Scandal of our Age and Nation too, as if we would to a tittle make *Ver.* 8. good the Prophet's Charge in this Chapter. Our full feeding makes us luſtful and unclean; nay, as if we would go beyond it, we not only *aſſemble by Troops in the Harlots Houſes*, but we even take them into our own, and maintain them with more Delicacy and Tenderneſs, than is commonly afforded to a lawful Wife; yea, with greater Extravagance and Expence than a numerous Family requires and needs. You know that what I ſay is too true; for to our *ſhame* be it ſpoken, *Acts* 26. 26. *Theſe things are not done in a Corner*; for theſe Vices do not only follow the Courts of Princes, and fly into the Country, but creep into the City too; God grant they never ſtep up upon the Bench! Beſides which, what notorious Prophanation of God's Day is upon every happy return of it to be ſeen, whilſt by ſome it is neglected, and one half of it ſlept away, and the other half as idlely ſpent, either abroad in the Fields, if the Weather invite,

invite, or the pretence of going to hear ſome fam'd Preacher two or three Miles out of Town, excuſe the itch of Curioſity and a rambling Humour, or elſe in a Tavern or in an Ale-houſe, where God's Name and Day are by a curſed Epitome both prophaned and abuſed together, and his Worſhip too often entrenched upon: for thoſe Places are not only frequented when the Doors of God's Houſe are ſhut, and his publick Service ended, but even when they are open, and every good Chriſtian ſhould be engaged therein. Had we no Laws to prevent and reſtrain theſe things, they would only be Perſonal Sins; but ſince we have, and thoſe wholſome and ſtrong enough, the not putting them in Execution, will I fear, make them all become National. Be but then ſo faithful to your ſelves as to conſider what will be the end of theſe Things, whether God will not *viſit and take Vengeance* upon us, as well as upon others in the like Caſe, and what we ſhall do then when he doth ſo? But,

3. From our Principles and Practices let us proceed to our Profeſſion and Behaviour in matters of Religion, and I am afraid our Hypocriſie, Unbelief, and Apoſtacy, will be found as great as theirs, if not greater, by how much the Religion we profeſs is more refin'd and clear, than theirs was. How infinitely we are beholden to Almighty God for the Purity and Simplicity

of his Goſpel; I need not tell you; I wiſh it did not as fully diſcover the greatneſs of our Abuſe and Neglect of it! We have, it's true, enjoyed it for many Years, and that not as it hath been mixed with the Traſh of the Church of *Rome*, but as it hath been reſcued from their ſacrilegious Hands, and reſtored to its native Plainneſs and Simplicity; but alas, like the Children of *Iſrael*, when delivered out of *Egypt*, we are returning back thither again, and think the Onions and Garlick of their Superſtitious Fopperies better than the Milk and Honey of the beſt Reformation that ever was. What Arts have been uſed to introduce Popery? and what a ready and cheerful Compliance have they met with by too too many of us? So that we ſeem ready to apoſtatize from that Truth, which Chriſt and his Apoſtles left us, and which by the Blood of ſo many Martyrs of our own Nation hath been ſealed and confirmed to us. How many are there that are making *Friends of the unrighteous Mammon*, and ſecuring to themſelves an Intereſt amongſt thoſe, whom by the Laws of God and Man they ought to avoid, thereby betraying themſelves into thoſe Snares they pretend to fear, and which nothing but ſuch a cowardly and ſordid Compliance can force them into. Bleſſed be God, we have the Government on our ſide yet, the Laws are both our Warrant and Defence, beſides which the

Luk. 19. 9.

Reaſon

Reaſon of our own Minds convinceth us, and the true Intereſt of our Country calls upon us to *be valiant for the Truth*, and therefore if we fall back and forſake it, *and ſwear by them that are no Gods*, as in Popery we muſt, our Guilt will be almoſt, if not altogether, unpardonable, *How ſhall I pardon thee for this*, ſaith God by the Prophet: *But I hope better things of you, and things that accompany Salvation, tho I thus ſpeak*, and that you will never wittingly do any thing that may be the occaſion of ſo great Miſchief to your ſelves and Country. But there is one thing, which if not ſpeedily prevented, will before we are aware, let in that which we ſo much fear and cry out againſt, and which perhaps too too many of us more or leſs may be acceſſary to, I mean thoſe unnatural Heats and Diviſions amongſt our ſelves, amidſt which, tho we are not altogether ſwerv'd from *the Form*, yet we are ſtrangely degenerated from the true Spirit *and Power of Godlineſs* and Chriſtianity, which is indeed a moſt pernicious ſort of Apoſtacy; for a falſe Religion, that's good natured *and kind, gentle and eaſy to be intreated*, is better than the Profeſſion of the trueſt Religion in the World, that's accompanied with Heart burnings and Animoſities, and immoderately heated by unchriſtian Strifes and Debates; and that this is our Caſe at this Day is evident enough; but how fatal the Effects and Conſequence thereof will be, I am afraid to think of;

Jer. 9. 3. *Cap.* 5. 7. *Ver.* 7. *Heb.* 6. 9. 2 *Tim.* 3. 5. *Jam.* 3. 17.

of. God of his Mercy divert the *Omen*, and unite us more firmly to himſelf, and to one another; for whilſt there is envying, ſtrife, and diviſions amongſt us, *we are* not only *carnal, and walk as Men*; but whilſt we foment and encourage theſe things, we become *earthly, ſenſual*, yea, *deviliſh*; and then we muſt needs introduce *Confuſion, and every evil Work*: that which we fear will come upon us, yea, we ſhall bring it upon our ſelves; and then it will be too late to enquire *what we ſhall do in the end thereof*. But,

1 Cor. 3. 3. James 3. 15, 16. Jer. 5. 31

Secondly, Since our Sins are ſo many and great, let us, in imitation of the Prophets faithfulneſs in the Caſe, enquire into the Obligations that have been laid upon us to reform and amend. He aggravates their Sins with this Circumſtance, that they were acted by them, *when God gave them Rain, both the former and latter in its Seaſon, and reſerved to them the appointed Weeks of the Harveſt*: yea, *when he fed them to the full*, that is, beſtowed upon them the greateſt abundance of all outward Bleſſings. And if upon an impartial inquiry into the thing, it be found that Almighty God has been in all reſpects as bountiful unto us, we may as reaſonably expect that he ſhould call us to an account for the abuſe of his Mercies, as well as for the breach of his Laws: yea, and more too, becauſe theſe are a kind Obligation added to the Authority of the other; and there's nothing

Verſ. 24. Verſ. 7.

whets

whets and ſharpens the Sword of Juſtice more, than Ingratitude; it gives indeed a double edge to it, the one from the Power that is ſo juſtly incenſed, and the other from the Kindneſs that is ſo groſly abuſed. Well then, to conſider the Caſe before us, What variety of ſignal Mercies have we been bleſt with for a long time together? What miraculous and repeated Deliverances have we had? What Attempts have been made upon our Peace and Tranquillity, and how often have they been fruſtrated and diſappointed? and may they for ever be ſo. How often have our Lives and Liberties been ſtruck at and aſſaulted? and yet they have been as often reſcued and preſerv'd; and may they be ſo ſtill. What deſperate Attempts have been made to deſtroy both our Religion and Government, and how graciouſly have they been protected and defended, and all this almoſt by Miracle; for we have, as it were, only *ſtood ſtill and ſeen the Salvation of God.* Upon the amazing Methods of which, as we have reaſon to look back with wonder and delight, ſo we have reaſon alſo to reflect upon our own Ingratitude with horror and amazement; eſpecially too, if we conſider that to all the publick Mercies which we have ſuch a comfortable ſhare in, there's not a Man of us but has many particular Bleſſings beſides, that deſerve

Exod. 14. 13.

deſerve as great a meaſure of acknowledgment as the reſt. And when all theſe ſhall be ſummed up together, (and, *O God, how great is the ſum of them!*) and we call'd to an account for the improvement, wherewithal ſhall we appear! what ſhall we anſwer! good God! what will become of us! But,

Pſ. 139. 17.

Thirdly, That which aggravated their Sin to the height, was the many Warnings and Calls they had to reform and amend; and yet, ſaid he, *they have belied the Lord, and ſaid, It is not he; neither ſhall evil come upon us, neither ſhall we ſee the Sword or Famine*: nay, *the Prophets* themſelves *ſhall become Wind, and the Word is not in them.* And this I am afraid will fill up the meaſure of our ſins too: for he hath often called us, and we have refuſed to hearken; he hath given us many fair Warnings, but we have hardened our hearts againſt them; he hath ſhaken his Rod over us, yea, and ſometimes let us feel the ſmart of it, but we have *refuſed to receive Correction*; we have deafned our Ears to the louder and more dreadful Voice of his Judgments, and hardned our Hearts againſt the ſtill and ſmooth Voice of his Word. He hath ſometimes *come in flaming Fire, taking vengeance*; and if, during the heat of its devouring Fury, we have been a little warm in our Devotions, and ſomething melted into Repentance; yet as that hath

V. 12, 13.

Jer. 5. 3.

2 Theſſ. 1. 8.

hath abated, we have cool'd and return'd, not only to our former, but have even contracted a far greater degree of hardneſs. Sometimes he hath enlarged the Commiſſion of his *deſtroying Angel*, and made the *Peſtilence, that walks in darkneſs, to waſte at noon-day*: And if amidſt dying Groans, and infectious Fears, we have been made to relent; when they have been removed, ſo have our Relentings too, and a greater Plague behind, even that of Sin, and hardneſs of Heart. Sometimes he hath unſheathed the bloody Sword of War, and if amidſt the mercileſs and inhumane ſlaughters it has made, we have been forced to ſue for Peace, how have we abuſed it when we have had it, yea, even been weary of it too, whilſt we have broke out into as unnatural, tho' not altogether ſo bloody a War againſt one another? Bleſſed be God, our Swords are not yet drawn, but our Tongues and our Pens are, and with theſe we cut like a ſharp Razor; and inſtead of uniting in our praiſes to God for our Civil Peace and Plenty, we are diſtracting our own Devotions, yea, and provoking, (I had almoſt ſaid devouring) one another, whilſt our Adverſaries, in the day they look for, (which God grant may never come) will make no difference, but ſwallow us up together, and laugh at us too, to ſee how dextrouſly we do their Work for them

Pſal. 91. 6.

our ſelves. But this is not all; for theſe and many others of the like nature have been back'd and enforc'd upon us, by many ſeaſonable and pious Diſcourſes. The Miniſters of the Goſpel have applyed themſelves to the Times, Places, and Perſons they have liv'd in, and been ſent unto; and yet I am afraid, inſtead of hearkening and inclining the Ear, we have too too many of us hardened our Hearts, *and done worſe than our Fathers*: and if ſo, what can we expect, but that he ſhould deal worſe by us than ever he hath done yet? for that's always the method of his proceedings. When he varies the method of his Providence, and finds that neither Kindneſs nor Severity will work upon us, but that we eaſily break all *the Cords of his Love*, and ruſt under the very File, his Patience is ſoon turned into Fury, his Pity into an implacable Revenge; his Mercy adds both ſpeed and weight unto his Juſtice, and transforms a moſt compaſſionate Father into a conſuming Fire; for God will certainly *viſit for theſe things*, where-ever they are, his *Soul will be avenged on ſuch a Nation*, let its outward condition be what it will: And this leads me to the fourth and laſt Particular, which is to enquire,

Jer.7.26

Hoſ.11.4.

IV. What

IV. What we are to do in such a Case, and under such Circumstances as ours are. That we have bin notoriously guilty of the Breach of God's Laws, notwithstanding all that he hath done to keep us within the bounds of our Duty and Obedience, cannot be denied; that we are therefore in very great danger of being very severely handled, if not utterly destroyed, is apparently evident to all, that are not obstinately resolv'd to run all hazards, rather than take up and amend. It's but natural and reasonable then for us to enquire what we are to do to prevent our own Ruine, and no longer cry out only, and complain of the dangerous Times we live in; but to be very speedy in our Resolutions what to do to make them better. And here I suppose every one will be ready to tell you what's to be done. Some cry, Open and enlarge the Church-doors, and let in the Dissenters, and then all will be well; others cry, Shut them out, or we shall never be at Peace. Some cry, Away with Impositions and Ceremonies, the Reliques of Popery and Earnest of its Return: Others complain of Schism and Separation, Faction and Sedition, that the Dissenters do the Jesuits Work; and you may as well tollerate the one, as connive at the other. Some found our Peace and our Plenty in a general Toleration;

others tell you, It's the next way to Ruine and Confuſion, and all this while few or none will take any Advice but their own; ſo that amidſt the ſeveral Preſcriptions, we are ready to periſh, and that not becauſe we want Help, but rather becauſe we have too much, our Danger not being ſo much from our Diſeaſe, as the Multitude and Diſagreement of our Phyſitians; for whilſt they are diſputing what's fitteſt for us to take, our Diſtemper grows upon us, and before we can agree, we languiſh and die. For my part I ſhall not preſume to interpoſe this way, but ſhall leave all things of this nature to my Superiours, to whom they properly belong, reſolving to be obedient in all things, as far as a good Conſcience will give me Leave, and where it will not, to endeavour with as much Cheerfulneſs as I can to ſuffer and ſubmit; and I think it would be never the worſe for us, if we would all of us do ſo too. Beſides which, I have only two or three things to add farther by way of Exhortation, and ſhall then conclude.

1. The firſt is, That we endeavour to make our Peace with God as ſpeedily as we can, by an unfeigned Repentance and thorough Reformation. Our Comfort is, that we have a God to deal with us, that is as ready to receive us, as

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we can be to return unto him; and desires to be at Peace with us, as much as we can do, that get most by it. Now since it is not the distance of his Heighth and Greatness, nor the Severity and Rigour of his Nature, but our *Iniquities that have separated between us and our God*: The speedy breaking off of them will be the most effectual way to procure a *lengthening of our Tranquillity*; and indeed it cannot reasonably be expected any other way; *For who ever hardned himself against God, and prospered?* We may be let alone for a time; but to think that shall always be so, is as absurd and foolish a Conclusion as can be; for the longer we have been spared, the less time is behind. The more we have been suffered to multiply our Sins, the sooner will the measure of them be filled up. The longer God's Hand has been with-held, the higher it has been lifted up, and the Heavier it will fall at last. For God's sake then, and your own, for your Country's and Religions sake; yea, for the sake of all that's near and dear to you, that you may no more see *Beauty turned into Ashes, and Death riding triumphantly upon his Pale Horse* through all your Streets, and the Sword devouring any more Flesh; That you may not be *punished seven times more*, and worse than you have been, think of these things, and think often and seriously of them too, and suffer

Isa. 59. 2.

Dan. 4. 27.

Job 9. 4.

Isa. 61. 3. *Rev.* 6. 9.

Levit. 26. 18.

not the Impreſſions that ſuch Reflections commonly make, to wear off again without doing their deſired and neceſſary Work. Let not your Repentance be only a crying out of the Sins of others, which is rather a venting the Spleen, than a true humbling of the Soul: Nor let it be exerciſed upon your ſelves upon ſome ſolemn Occaſions only, and whilſt you are under the Strength and Power of a preſent Conviction, which is indeed for the moſt part but like throwing a little Water upon the Fire, which though it may damp it a little for the preſent; yet afterwards it makes it burn the fiercer, but let it be ſeen in a conſtant and regular Diſpoſition of Mind, fortified with firm Reſolutions to return no more unto Folly, and in a conſtant endeavour to keep all the Commandments o God *without Partiality, and without Hypocriſy*; for elſe we ſhall but *ſweep and garniſh* the Houſe *for ſeven worſe Spirits*, that will not be ſo eaſily caſt out, but will *make our latter End worſe than our Beginning*.

Jam. 3. 17. *Mat.* 12. 43, 44, 45. 2. *Pet.* 2. 20.

2. Be exhorted to maintain and promote Peace and Concord amongſt all Men. Next to Peace with God, without which all other ſecurity will prove deceitful, Unity amongſt our ſelves is certainly the moſt effectual thing to the making

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of us an happy People; and till that be attain'd, we may poſſibly be quiet, but we ſhall never be ſafe. We are continually liable to the malice of our Enemies, and nothing expoſes us, and encourageth them more, than our unnatural Diviſions amongſt our ſelves; by theſe they grow upon us daily; and indeed, their greateſt Stratagem is, to foment and encreaſe them, as well knowing it in vain to make any other Aſſaults upon us. Should they invade us with their whole Power and Strength, we might then poſſibly unite, and, under God, be certainly too hard for them: This they know, and fear, and therefore dare not attempt us openly, but hope for an eaſy Victory, when, like *Gideon*, *they ſee every Man's Sword againſt his fellow.* And ſhall we now give them ſuch an Opportunity? God forbid! and yet I fear we are in a very fair way to it, and there's nothing certainly can prevent it, but by doing what in us lies, to *live peaceably with all Men*; and this I am perſwaded that all of you know and believe. But then, here's our misfortune; though we all of us cry aloud for Peace, yet as long as we expect it only in our own way, we are never like to have it. It's next to an impoſſibility, that all the World ſhould in every thing be of one and the ſame mind; but yet for all that, there's no neceſſity that we ſhould wrangle

Judg. 7. 22.

Rom. 12. 18.

wrangle and fall out, as alas we too frequently do; and yet when we have what we desire, it's many times not worth the Busle we make to obtain it. Most of the Disputes that are raised amongst us, have more of Heat and Passion, Interest and Pride, than weight of Reason in them: Nay, the greatest Matters in Controversie, do neither need nor require that fierceness and heat with which they are too often managed; nay, I fear, they are greatly worsted by it. The greatest Matters in the Debate between us and the Dissenters, are in the general owned on both sides. We very truly, and upon good ground, urge the necessity of Obedience to lawful Authority; nor do they deny the truth of it, they only plead an Exemption for Conscience-sake, when any thing unlawful is required; and this we cannot deny neither; only here's the Question, Whether these things are unlawful or no? And cannot this now be argued without all this eagerness and heat? Cannot we dispute, but we must be ready to devour? Must our Disputes, which are the best sort of Christians, make us cease to be Men? and by contending for the Church, hazard the ruine of the State. Certainly this temper does very ill become the Name of a Christian, and does by no means answer the great Ends and Purposes of the Gospel. Men's Minds are not

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to be convinced by hard Names, and ill Language, but by Truth and Right Reaſon, and that too urg'd with good Nature and Love; for even Truth it ſelf is recommended to us under the greateſt diſadvantage that can be, when it's accompanied with fierceneſs and paſſion; ſuch an everlaſting Truth is St. *James's* Aſſertion, That *the Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteouſneſs of God.* Jam. 1. 20.

Now if the Government think fit to require ſuch things of us, and we all profeſs it our duty to yield an active Obedience, as far as with a good Conſcience vve can, and vvhere vve cannot, to ſubmit, but by no means to reſiſt; vvhat hinders us but that we may do this without flying at one anothers Throats, to the diſturbance of the Government, to the ſcandal of Chriſtianity, and to our own certain Ruin and Confuſion? It is not for private Chriſtians (and of ſuch only I am ſpeaking) to manage themſelves after this ſort, but rather, *as the Elect of God, to put on bowels of Mercy, Kindneſs, humbleneſs of Mind, Meekneſs, Long-ſuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake ſhall forgive us*; for without this temper we ſhall never be ſecure and ſafe. Let us then at length return unto a better Mind, and in all things act according to the Duty of our Places, and eſpe- Col. 3. 12, 13.

cially in this; ſeeing when we have wrangled and vex'd one another as long as we can, we can neither make new Laws, nor alter the Old; our Duty and Buſineſs therefore is, to ſubmit peaceably to them we have, and to make our condition under them, as eaſy and as comfortable as we can, till God ſhall find out a way to mend it. And in the mean time,

Prov. 8. 15. 3. Laſtly, Let us pray unto that *God, by whom Kings Reign, and Princes decree Juſtice*, to inſpire the Heart of the King with true heavenly Wiſdom; and to guide and direct all others, that are or ſhall be called to Publick Actions and Counſels, and are thereby any ways concern'd in the adminiſtration of Juſtice, and making of Laws, that ſome effectual Means may be found, in a Legal and Chriſtian way, to compoſe our Differences, and heal our Breaches: And that he would alſo, in the mean time, allay thoſe Unnatural and Unchriſtian Diſtempers of our Minds, and diſpoſe us to a more ſober and upright walking before him; to a ready and true Chriſtian ſubmiſſion to the Government we live under, and are ſo happy in the conſtitutions of; and to an univerſal and unfeigned Love and Charity to one another; that ſo when God ſhall come to viſit us, as certainly he will, it may be

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a Viſitation of Mercy and Kindneſs, and not of Fury and Indignation; that his *whole Heart, and his whole Soul, may rejoice over us to do us good*; and not to be provoked to execute Vengeance upon us. Jer. 32. 42.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, for the ſake, and in and through the Merits of the ever bleſſed Jeſus; To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, Glory, and Praiſe. Amen.

FINIS.

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